

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
October 7, 2005

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**CALIFORNIA DEMOCRATS FIGHT FOR THE FUTURE  
OF THE WEST LOS ANGELES VA**

Today, Congressman Henry A. Waxman, Senator Dianne Feinstein, Senator Barbara Boxer, and thirteen Los Angeles area Members of the House of Representatives (Hilda Solis, Howard Berman, Adam Schiff, Xavier Becerra, Diane Watson, Lucille Roybal-Allard, Maxine Waters, Jane Harman, Juanita Millender-McDonald, Grace Napolitano, Linda Sanchez, Loretta Sanchez, and Brad Sherman) urged VA Secretary James Nicholson to follow six guiding principles in determining the future of the West LA VA. These principles were adopted unanimously by the CARES (Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services) Local Advisory Panel at a public meeting on September 22, 2005.

"There is an unfortunate history of attempts by commercial interests to develop the West LA VA property, Rep. Waxman said. "Our veterans, community, and elected officials have fought them strenuously and successfully in the past. We are firmly united in our opposition to any effort to use the VA campus for commercial purposes. This land belongs to our veterans."

"The West Los Angeles VA property was originally donated to honor the service of our veterans, and I believe that we must keep it in the hands of our Veterans," Sen. Feinstein said. "That's why I've urged the Department of Veterans Affairs to adopt the independent recommendations of the Local Advisory Panel. I am pleased to work with Congressman Waxman, Los Angeles County Supervisor Yaroslavsky and other local government officials, as well as the West LA community to ensure that this land remains available to those who have fought honorably to protect our freedoms and way of life."

In October 2000, the VA initiated the CARES plan to evaluate the VA's health care services, plan for veterans' future health care needs, and realign the VA's medical facilities and services to efficiently and effectively meet those needs.

In February 2002, then-Secretary Principi held a town hall meeting in Los Angeles and pledged that he would not permit any of the West Los Angeles VA property to be used for commercial purposes.

Consultants recently hired by the VA, however, have proposed a number of business plan options for the West Los Angeles VA, including commercial development of parts of the campus. The congressional letter urges Secretary Nicholson to reject these plans and to assure that the West LA VA campus will be preserved for the direct benefit of veterans by adhering to the principles adopted by the CARES Local Advisory Panel.